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ABSTRACT

Social revolutions, which frequently use the press as a propaganda weapon, have been rare in Latin America despite the striking social inequalities of the region. Only three classic socioeconomic revolutions have unfolded in the hemisphere--in Mexico in 1910, in Bolivia in 1952, and in Cuba in 1959. Bolivia attempted to effect radical reforms through the democratic process, until the military seized the revolution in 1964. The press was decisive in fomenting and implementing the Bolivian National Revolution (1952-1964), guided by the political group known as the Movimiento Nacionalists Revolucionario (MNR). It is this phenomenon that this study examines. The Bolivian National Revolution would not have succeeded if the MNR had not aroused and sustained the social conscience of the small middle class through newspapers and literature. "La Nacion," official newspaper spokesman of the revolution for 12 years, declared, "Traditionally, the MNR is a party of journalists. The founding staff was (in 1941) almost totally composed of newspapermen. As the years passed, those men occupied high functions in the government and in diplomacy, but almost always as a consequence of their activity displayed in the press." (TO)

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JERRY W. KNUDSON

The Press and the Bolivian National Revolution

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Introduction

> Our purpose was simple. It was to facilitate, through the press, the attainment of the objectives for which we were fighting. In other words, it was an attempt to enlist the help of the press for our revolution.
>
> —Víctor Paz Estenssoro, President of Bolivia, speaking before the National Press Club in Washington in 1963.[1]

SOCIAL REVOLUTIONS, which frequently use the press as a propaganda weapon, have been rare in Latin America despite the striking social inequalities of the region. Only three classic socioeconomic revolutions have unfolded in the hemisphere. In many respects, Twentieth Century world history began with the Mexican Revolution of 1910, seven years before the Bolshevik upheaval in Russia. But perhaps the staggering cost of the Mexican holocaust—with the loss of more than one million lives—acted as a deterrent to violent change elsewhere in Latin America. Almost half a century was to pass before social revolution came to isolated Bolivia in 1952 and crossroads Cuba in 1959. Bolivia attempted to effect radical reforms through the democratic process, until the military seized the revolution in 1964, whereas Cuba early entered the totalitarian world of state socialism. Other Latin American countries have since followed different paths. Social change directed by a new breed of military officers came to Peru in 1968, and the peaceful and legal implantation of Marxist socialism in Chile beginning in 1970 aroused the world's attention until that experiment was ended by the guns of September 1973.

Newspapers played a vital role in the Mexican Revolution of 1910,[2] but the press was even more decisive in fomenting and

[1] *Remarks by Víctor Paz Estenssoro, President of Bolivia, before the National Press Club* (Washington, D.C., 1963), 2.

[2] See Jerry W. Knudson, "The Press and the Mexican Revolution of 1910," *Journalism Quarterly*, 46:760-66 (Winter 1969).

implementing the Bolivian National Revolution (1952-1964), guided by the political group known as the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* (MNR, National Revolutionary Movement). It is this phenomenon that this study examines.

As violence has diminished, the rate of social change has accelerated. The violent phase of the Mexican Revolution lasted seven years, whereas three days of street fighting in La Paz and Oruro on April 9-11, 1952, were sufficient to topple the old order in Bolivia. Buttressed by an official press, MNR leaders plunged into all of their major revolutionary programs within their first two years in power. Whereas Mexico did not nationalize United States oil holdings until 1938—more than a quarter of a century after the Mexican Revolution had begun—Bolivia moved swiftly to nationalize the Big Three tin mines owned by the Patiño, Hochschild and Aramayo interests, each with annual incomes far exceeding the Bolivian national budget. Massive land reform was not a reality in Mexico until the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), whereas Bolivia redistributed one-third of her agricultural lands to formerly landless peasants within twelve years. To incorporate the Quechua and Aymará Indian masses further into national life, the MNR also granted universal suffrage. Previously, voting had been the exclusive privilege of only 200,000 literate, property-owning males in a population of three million.[3]

How were such profound changes possible in so short a time? The Bolivian National Revolution would not have succeeded if the MNR had not aroused and sustained the social conscience of the thin middle sector through newspapers and literature. As *La Nación*, official newspaper spokesman of the revolution for twelve years, once declared:

> Traditionally, the MNR is a party of journalists. The founding staff was [in 1941] almost totally composed of newspapermen who marked the awakening of the conscience of the Bolivian majorities from that memorable nucleus of revolutionary thought that was *La Calle* [a daily founded in 1936]. As the years passed, those men occupied high

[3] The best recent studies of the Bolivian National Revolution are James M. Malloy, *Bolivia, The Uncompleted Revolution* (Pittsburgh, 1970) and Malloy and Richard S. Thorn, eds., *Beyond the Revolution, Bolivia Since 1952* (Pittsburgh, 1971).

functions in the government and in diplomacy, but almost always as a consequence of their activity displayed in the press.[4]

Guillermo Lora, leader of the Trotskyite *Partido Obrero Revolucionario* (POR, Revolutionary Worker Party), has phrased this in an even more emphatic way, entitling a still unpublished manuscript about the MNR, "From a propaganda group, to a party of masses."[5]

[4] *La Nación*, Feb. 6, 1960.

[5] Herbert S. Klein, *Parties and Political Change in Bolivia, 1880-1952* (Cambridge, 1969), 424.

Wellsprings of Revolt

THE ROOTS of social abuse which this propaganda exploited lay deeply embedded in Bolivian history, but the disastrous Chaco War with Paraguay (1932-1935) bared them for all to see. Disillusioned by that senseless conflict, the revolutionary generation produced books and articles to exorcise the national past.[6]

The tragedy of the Chaco War underscored the many dislocations in Bolivian life. Indians ignorant of Spanish or even the meaning of the word "Bolivia" were hauled to a faraway front in the desolate southeastern Chaco Boreal to fight for an incomprehensible cause. Corruption gripped their superiors, who profited from fat war contracts or shirked their duties. As one wit said back in the capital, Bolivian military officers showed up only for the cocktail hour.[7] The country also suffered from a primitive technology. "Against the modern installations of the mines," observed another writer, "there remained in the countryside the plow of the Egyptians." Bolivian diplomats were incompetent or venal, he added, which "placed the country in the backrooms of all the chanceries."[8] With the League of Nations unable to stop the slaughter, Bolivia lost 60,000 killed, 70,000 square kilometers of land, and 50 million dollars—the origins of an inflation that was to cripple the country.

During this deathly struggle, there was a total absence of effective propaganda for the Bolivian cause, a lesson driven home to the men who later were to form the MNR. As the fighting slowly ground to a truce of exhaustion, *El Diario* of La Paz proclaimed, in early 1935, "Now it is an axiomatic truth that wars are won not only with cannon or machine-guns; the artillery of the presses and tribunes is as decisive for the triumph of a

[6] See Herbert S. Klein, *Orígines de la Revolución Nacional, la crisis de la generación del Chaco* (La Paz, 1968).

[7] For the most comprehensive account of the war, see David H. Zook, Jr., *The Conauct of the Chaco War* (New York, 1960).

[8] *La Nación,* March 17, 1956.

cause" as the fortunes of war. A Department of Propaganda had been created early in the struggle, and it was attached after a year to the Ministry of War. But it was mainly defensive, existing to censor cables sent out by the press services. Paraguay, on the other hand, had launched a propaganda offensive, bringing foreign—especially Argentine—correspondents to observe the action at the front, producing film of the fighting for worldwide distribution and sending Paraguayan cultural missions to Latin American capitals. "That kind of effort, with correspondents in the theater of operations—genuine journalists—and agents outside the republic is what Bolivian propaganda requires," declared *El Diario*.[9]

At the same time, the established press of Bolivia was discredited for supporting the war with enthusiasm. Gustavo A. Navarro, who wrote under the Russian pseudonym of "Tristán Marof," reflecting his admiration for the Soviet system, called the leading newspapers of La Paz "houses of journalistic prostitution." Navarro, an independent socialist, continued: "Defamation is the order of the day, like applause. There is not a line which is not controlled. The applause is not for the better or more worthy, but for the mediocre, the vile or the castrated."[10]

Thus, dissatisfied younger Bolivians turned to propaganda after the war to win adherents to their cause by founding their own newspapers—*La Calle* in 1936 and the *Semanario Busch* in 1941. In a pinch, even the lowly mimeograph machine or printed broadside served their purpose.[11] Through constant and dramatic repetition they stressed inequities in Bolivian life and advocated a true nationalism. In a sense, the MNR writers were spokesmen for the less articulate military men who had sworn in Paraguayan prisoner-of-war camps to rediscover the *razón de patria*. It was they who formed the secret lodge RADEPA in pursuit of a lost nationhood.[12]

Journalism and literature are more frequently intertwined in Latin America than elsewhere in the world, and the younger

[9] Jan. 24, 1935.

[10] *La tragedia del altiplano* (Buenos Aires, [1934]), 142-3.

[11] Luis Peñaloza C., *Historia del Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario, 1941-1952* (La Paz, 1963), 136.

[12] Robert Barton, *A Short History of the Republic of Bolivia* (La Paz, 1968), 248.

Bolivian men of letters used both to wage their own war of protest. As *La Nación* noted later, "It was said in the United States about the MNR that its was a revolution without books, as it was also said of certain other countries that theirs were books without revolutions."[13] This might have referred to neighboring Peru, where the Marxist-oriented José Carlos Mariátegui had issued a call for revolution in 1928 with his famous *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* (Seven Interpretive Essays on Peruvian Reality). Yet Peru experienced no profound social change until the populist, technocratic revolution of General Juan Velasco Alvarado began in 1968.

Carlos Montenegro, Nationalist

Bolivia, on the other hand, produced three men whose books and newspaper work helped to instigate and carry through a social revolution. Foremost among these writers was Carlos Montenegro, whose *Nacionalismo y coloniaje* (Nationalism and Colonialism) of 1943 was an affirmative call to greater national self-awareness. Before Montenegro, Bolivian letters had been dominated by the pessimism and defeatism of Alcides Argüedas' classic *Pueblo enfermo* (Sick People) of 1909, with its notorious dictum, "Wherever you place your finger in Bolivian life, you will produce pus." Disdain and deprecation were considered stylish after Argüedas. As late as the Chaco War, for example, a Bolivian president was quoted as saying, "You can plant turnips on the shoulders of the Bolivian people."[14] Montenegro felt the attitude spawned by Argüedas was pathological, with Bolivia doomed to morbid introspection unless the underlying causes of its semi-colonial economic subordination were revealed and righted.

Montenegro found Bolivian literature slavishly imitative of Argüedas, casting up only the reprehensible in national life. But Montenegro also scored the oligarchical press which he felt held the country in the throes of a chronic inferiority complex. It was no secret to anyone that the Big Three tin magnates held sway in the La Paz daily press. Simón I. Patiño held a controlling interest in *El Diario*, the dean of the capital's press, having been

[13] May 31, 1961.
[14] *La Nación*, Oct. 24, 1955.

founded by Manual Carrasco in 1904. Mauricio Hochschild dominated *Ultima Hora*, which was frequently called "the tin elephant of the afternoon" by its MNR opponent, *La Calle*. Carlos Víctor Aramayo owned *La Razón* outright. *La Razón* was to be the first victim of the Bolivian National Revolution. It never published again after the 1952 revolt, although many Bolivians believed that its death was a case of suicide rather than murder.

These newspapers, in Montenegro's view, were servile to interests alien to Bolivian nationhood. Hochschild, a German Jew naturalized in Argentina, was the only one of the Big Three who resided in Bolivia. Antenor Patiño, son of the discoverer of tin at Llallagua at the close of the Nineteenth Century, was reputed to be the world's sixth richest man, yet he seldom visited the source of his wealth. Thus Montenegro argued that the three La Paz daily newspapers supported the kind of elite government that would allow the Big Three to continue to take out of Bolivia tin earnings which made up 76 percent of the country's production. Moreover, Montenegro argued, the daily journalism of La Paz, depending as it did on western wire services, was alien to the Indian and *cholo* (mixed) culture of Bolivia. Montenegro continued:

> But the greatest wound which capitalist journalism inflicted on our people was creating a cunning and artificial way of thinking in the Bolivian literate classes. . . The public did not have, throughout half a century, any other source of cultural nutrition than journalism, and it learned to attend to and to judge things in consultation with the printed [newspaper] page. This was little less than an oracle for current opinion.[15]

The MNR always held Montenegro foremost among its intellectual precursors. As *La Nación* noted in 1955, "The debt which our people owes him is that he gave back the panoramic vision of our history, demonstrating that a scientific comprehension of our past and our present was possible, in order to establish the bases for a future." Before Montenegro, the newspaper continued, Bolivia had always been at the margin of history,

[15] *Nacionalismo y coloniaje, su expresión histórica en la prensa de Bolivia* (La Paz, 1953), 203.

consisting of "a small self-contained world of castes and feudal struggles." But Montenegro's scalpel cut through Bolivian life to expose a sharp national duality, and he urged the solidarity of men of the cities with the exploited of the mines and countryside.[16]

Born in Cochabamba in 1903, Montenegro was extremely active in journalism before his premature death from cancer in 1953 in New York. He was the director of the *Semanario Busch*, a weekly published briefly in La Paz in 1941 as the official organ of the nascent MNR. The paper was named for Colonel Germán Busch, reform military ruler of Bolivia from 1937 until his suicide in 1939. The MNR claimed Busch as a martyr, owing to the pressures exerted upon him by *la rosca*, the Bolivian elite which had instigated the Chaco War and profited from it. Montenegro also contributed extensively to *La Calle*, which lasted from its founding in 1936 until it was closed down by the military government of General Enrique Peñaranda in 1943. For these journalistic activities, Montenegro was imprisoned along with others in the tropical province of Velasco in 1941, accused of having helped plan an alleged *putsch* against the oligarchical government of Peñaranda. Montenegro was also under suspicion for having served as secretary general of the new *Partido Socialista* (Socialist Party) in 1936. But he continued to write under the pseudonym of "Kisiabó" from a prison camp in the interior.

Once a secondary school teacher and lawyer who defended the poor, Montenegro was named Minister of Agriculture in the cabinet of Major Gualberto Villarroel (1943-1946), who headed Bolivia's second abortive reform movement, and in 1944 he became ambassador to Mexico. During the *sexenio*, the six-year period from the overthrow of Villarroel in 1946 to the successful MNR revolution of 1952, Montenegro founded and directed the review "SEA" or *Síntesis Económica Americana* (American Economic Synthesis) in Buenos Aires where he supported himself by working on the prestigious Argentine newspaper, *La Prensa*. Dissatisfied with what he regarded as the biased and frequently erroneous reports of the wire services, Montenegro founded the short-lived *Servicio Intercontinental de Periodistas* (Journalists' Intercontinental Service), an independent group of writers from

[16] *La Nación*, Oct. 29, 1955.

the underdeveloped Latin American countries. After the 1952 revolution he was named Bolivia's ambassador to neighboring Chile.[17]

Yet Montenegro's crowning service to the Bolivian revolutionary cause was his book, *Nacionalismo y coloniaje*, which justified Bolivia's seizure of Standard Oil holdings in 1937 and urged nationalization of the Big Three tin mines. As *La Nación* later pointed out, Montenegro's book outlined the philosophy for the militancy of the MNR. "It demonstrates that the theoretical conception which the party sustains should be as monolithic as the form of its organization."[18] (The MNR was organized in a hierarchy of 45 departmental or provincial commands throughout the country to insure discipline.) Another writer stated in *La Nación* that Montenegro "formed the revolutionary generation that fights today for our country."[19]

Augusto Céspedes, Social Realist

The second man who shared the literary spotlight and the harsh day-to-day struggle of the opposition press was Augusto Céspedes, Bolivia's most famous living writer and one of only three Latin American authors invited to the Soviet Union in the summer of 1971. Céspedes is little known in the United States except for his short story, *"El pozo"* ("The Well"), anthologized from his collection of acidic vignettes of the Chaco War, *Sangre de mestizos* (Blood of Half-Breeds, 1936). Another work of biting social realism was *Metal del diablo* (The Devil's Metal, 1946) which excoriated Simón I. Patiño, the tin king of Bolivia, for his cruelty and indifference. Works of partisan history include *El dictador suicida* (The Dictator Self-Destroyed, 1956), an examination of events leading up to the death of Busch, and *El presidente colgado* (The Hanged President, 1966), an analysis of the rule and fate of Villarroel.

Like Montenegro, Céspedes was disgusted by the charade of the Chaco War (in which both fought) and, also like Montenegro, he combined his literary talents with journalistic output. With Armando Arce he was a co-founder of the MNR newspaper,

[17] Carlos Montenegro, *Documentos* (La Paz, 1954), 10 and 114-5.
[18] Oct. 24, 1955.
[19] Oct. 29, 1955.

La Calle, in 1936 and frequently contributed to its pages. After the MNR revolution of 1952, Céspedes became the fifth editor of the official newspaper, *La Nación*, appointed by Víctor Paz Estenssoro, the economist who was the major architect of the MNR and revolutionary president in 1952-1956 and 1960-1964.

As director of *La Nación*, Céspedes eschewed objectivity and embraced the cause of the socially committed writer. In his first editorial of April 17, 1959, he noted that "each man sees things in accordance with what he is . . . his origins, his race, his class, his ideas—a thing that occurs in a particularly clear way in the realm of social events that . . . do not admit of that independence which the spokesmen of the ex-ruling class proclaim." Céspedes reiterated that *La Nación*, founded on October 12, 1952, was affiliated with the MNR and thus accountable for the outcome of the revolution. It was, he maintained, a newspaper "that is *movimientista* because together with the MNR it had made that Revolution and is rendered accountable because no Bolivian can feel himself divorced from the great vital acts of this people." Céspedes added, "Revolutionary journalism wants to be another of the instruments of the Revolution, not only the observer but also the expression of it." Therefore, he concluded, "*La Nación* does not have to subscribe to a similar idol of 'objectivity' . . ."[20]

Céspedes' credo for the socially committed writer was stated even more emphatically in his acceptance speech when he received the national prize for literature in 1957. In it he defined the duty of writers in "semi-colonial" countries. Literary men in advanced countries did not need to feel a debt to further nationalism, he asserted, "but on the contrary, in the undeveloped countries there is almost no more than raw materials and some writers." Céspedes declared it was far from his intention to affirm that the function of the writer should be that of the guerrilla fighter. (After 1961 he refused to accept any more national prizes for literature, hoping thereby to encourage younger writers and sway them from the course of direct action.) But, noting his own career, he said, "I who left abandoned, in my juvenile years, the artist who could have been, in order to dedicate the greater part of my time to politics, [hoped] to find a conciliating solution between this politician and that novelist." (Céspedes was

[20] *La Nación*, April 17, 1959.

one of the charter members of the MNR and also served as deputy from La Paz while he edited *La Naćión.*) The writer continued, "I essayed then an interpretative medium that permitted me to shelter simultaneously the literary man and the politician; that is, I wrote a history." For that effort, he won the national literary prize for *El dictador suicida,* published in Chile in 1956. Céspedes concluded his acceptance speech by emphasizing that "the mission of the writer in the oppressed country consists in forming the national conscience: he should be miner, peasant and explorer of the national conscience, the only durable possibility which the shape of our small world and our cultural dependence allows us."[21]

Armando Arce, Street Fighter

The third member of the literary and journalistic triumvirate of the early MNR was Armando Arce, a less well known figure of Bolivian journalism. Arce was born into a comfortable family but was defrauded of his patrimony by his guardian after the death of his father. With a high school diploma, Armando Arce became a journalist and worked for eleven years on *El Diario,* for which Montenegro and Céspedes also once reported, becoming editor-in-chief. He left that position voluntarily to found *El Universal,* an independent daily which under his leadership was the first to launch vigorous campaigns for social and economic reform. Both Montenegro and Céspedes contributed to this newspaper during its three years of life (1932-1935) against enormous odds. It was closed by the government. Then, after a year's interval, Arce and Céspedes founded *La Calle,* dedicated to continuing the struggle against the power of the great mine owners and large landholders.

The MNR after 1941 disclaimed any official connection with *La Calle,* the gutter scrapper tabloid of La Paz journalism, but it was clearly that party's spokesman. Its name (The Street) signaled its editorial policy. In Spanish American culture, houses are places of safety and retreat, built solidly and flush against the street, which is a trafficway of persons and of ideas, a place

[21] A complete text of the speech may be found in *La Nación,* Nov. 23, 1957. An interesting interview with Céspedes was printed in *Vanguardia,* July 29, 1971.

of potential danger. Thus, the MNR announced that it would carry its fight to the streets against the entrenched enclaves of *la rosca.*

La Calle was constantly at the throats of its journalistic opponents in La Paz. It never identified them by name but referred instead to "the morning daily of the great mining interests [*La Razón*]"; the "plutocratic press" or *"la prensa rosquera,"* and "the press that serves the interests of the mining superstate."[22] On one occasion, *La Calle* derided "the hoarse cry of that venal press, traitorous to the sacred interests of the country, [which] has become converted into the strident croak of fat frogs on the point of bursting."[23] Edited by Armando Arce throughout its stormy existence (1936-1943), *La Calle* was willing to seize upon any issue, including exploitation of the anti-Semitism latent in Bolivian life, to boost the MNR to power.[24] *La Calle* suffered police harassment and temporary closures. Arce was jailed on several occasions.

Oscar Delgado has written a biography of Arce which asserts that as editor of both *El Universal* and *La Calle* the journalist was in "elbow-to-elbow" contact with Paz Estenssoro, who served Bolivia three times as president, and with the group of independent deputies who later formed the MNR and made Paz its leader. The latter group included Hernán Siles Zuazo, second-in-command of the MNR and president from 1956 to 1960 while Paz Estenssoro was ambassador to England. An editor of *La Nación,* Hugo González Rioja, also has noted that Arce "perhaps did not foresee that what happened almost fatally to every Bolivian intellectual would happen to him: he would wind up in the political jousting field."[25] After the victory of 1952, Arce was Bolivian ambassador to Colombia, Peru and Mexico.[26]

At first, the group that was to form the MNR relied on reform-

[22] *La Calle,* Dec. 18, 1942, and Feb. 12 and 28, 1946.

[23] March 24, 1946.

[24] See Jerry W. Knudson, "The Bolivian Immigration Bill of 1942: A Case Study in Latin American Anti-Semitism," *American Jewish Archives,* 22:138-58 (November 1970).

[25] *La Nación,* Sept. 6, 1960.

[26] The information on Arce is taken from an article in *La Gaceta de la Prensa* of Madrid, reprinted in *La Nación,* Aug. 14, 1959. Arce read the article and noted there were no mistakes. *La Nación,* Aug. 20, 1959.

minded military elements as the only practical way to gain power. These men supported the tentative reforms of Colonel Germán Busch (1937-1939) before finally sharing power with Major Gualberto Villarroel (1943-1946). During this bitter period of jockeying for power, the MNR propagandists had to fight the entrenched and socially conservative press of La Paz, especially *La Razón*, the organ of tin tycoon Carlos Victor Aramayo. After the MNR gained power in 1952, the party kept *La Razón* closed, just as those who came later almost absorbed *El Diario* in 1971.

An examination of *La Razón* will reveal why the MNR could no longer tolerate the newspaper's existence after 1952. The struggle with *La Razón* was a miniature crucible of the broader revolutionary struggle and reveals indirectly the social philosophy of the MNR.

The Death of *La Razon*

Founded in 1917 by the physician José María Escalier to boost his presidential aspirations, the newspaper *La Razón* was soon acquired by the powerful Aramayo tin-mining family. Carlos Victor Aramayo had an annual income of more than $1,500,000, which permitted him to dabble in La Paz journalism. *La Razón* soon captured the widest circulation in Bolivia and gained an international reputation as a well-edited newspaper, yet it was the most reactionary of the capital dailies.[27]

La Paz in 1917 was not a propitious place to launch a newspaper. The overwhelming majority of Bolivians could not read, and the man in the street seldom had money, even half a peso, to squander on a newspaper: for that amount, he could take half a chicken home to his hungry family. Yet until universal suffrage was granted by the MNR in 1952, the Bolivian literate elite was an audience worth cultivating. This was the class that held the reins of political, social and economic power. Although *La Razón*'s circulation was always small, in terms of journalism in industrial societies, the newspaper's impact was large and at times decisive.

The early days of *La Razón*, as with many a newspaper, spawned a number of traditions and legends. Under the first director, Alfredo Infante, staff members worked without pay, getting only free bus fare and movie passes. The newspaper was hand set entirely long after the Linotype machine had effected a journalistic revolution elsewhere. One typesetter was especially valued, for he was the only staff member who could decipher the difficult handwriting of President Bautista Saavedra (1921-1925), a fact which revealed how closely the newspaper was linked with the governing oligarchy. At first, *La Razón* was printed on an ancient flatbed press hand fed by an Indian. In the early years, before the newspaper acquired major wire services, its only foreign

[27] Marof, *La tragedia del altiplano*, 138-41.

coverage was supplied by one correspondent in Buenos Aires.[28]

The editorial reactions of *La Razón* to six major events and issues in recent Bolivian history will serve to define its character. The events are the death of Busch in 1939, the Catavi mine massacre of 1942, the Indian problem, the closing of *La Calle* in 1943, the regime of Villarroel ending in 1946, and the elections of 1951. These events formed the calendar of the formation of the MNR itself. Thus, a study of *La Razón*'s positions on these matters will provide clues as to why the newspaper fell victim to the MNR once the latter had gained power.

The Death of Busch

Germán Busch was a curious and painful figure in Bolivian history. Child of the elite and a member of the Bolivian military establishment, he seemed an unlikely candidate to lead the country's first genuine reform effort. Young and impatient, sensitive to the point of neurasthenia, Busch inherited the backlash of the Chaco War which propelled him into the presidency after the *coup d'etat* which ousted General David Toro on July 13, 1937. The younger and more idealistic Army officers had triumphed.[29]

La rosca, the Bolivian elite, reacted swiftly to the danger which Busch presented to them. Carlos Víctor Aramayo, owner of *La Razón*, was charged with financing an abortive rebellion at Palmar on March 26, 1938, led by the ousted President Toro. But Busch would not be intimidated. His far-reaching reform decree of June 7, 1939 (a symbolic date used by the MNR to announce its program in 1942) struck at the heart of the mining interests by requiring that all expatriate profits be deposited first in *Banco Central de Bolivia* to be returned to the owners at the government's discount.[30] With that decree, although never enforced,

[28] *La Razón*, Jan. 1, 1943. There is no adequate history of Bolivian journalism. Víctor Santa Cruz, *Contribución a la historia del periodismo en Bolivia* (Sucre, 1962) is sketchy, and Luis E. Heredia, *Prensa y nacionalismo* (Potosí, 1955) is polemical.

[29] See Herbert S. Klein, "David Toro and the Establishment of 'Military Socialism' in Bolivia," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 45:25-52 (February 1965), and "Germán Busch and the Era of 'Military Socialism' in Bolivia," *ibid.*, 47:166-84 (May 1967).

[30] Porfirio Díaz Machicao, *Historia de Bolivia: Toro, Busch, Quintanilla, 1936-1940* (La Paz, 1957), 101-4.

Busch signed his own death warrant. He died August 23, 1939, and the pressure exerted upon him by the tin companies was blamed for his death, an apparent suicide.

Conditions surrounding Busch's death were so tense that newspapers were forbidden to publish—after *La Razón* had rushed an extra edition to the streets—and government troops were stationed in all of the printing plants. When public calm was restored, *La Razón* breathed a sigh of relief: "Although men pass, institutions remain." With Busch gone, *La Razón* urged a return to "the tutelary institutions that our forefathers forged"—in short, no more attempts at reform. The newspaper concluded, "Let the tragedy place a parenthesis around all comment. . . It is enough to know that the dictator rendered justice to himself, leaving to the country a [painful] experience."[31]

So ended, with a bullet in the right temple, Bolivia's first reform movement. There were no observances of the anniversaries of Busch's death for three years, as *la rosca* entrenched itself once again under the repressive military regimes of General Carlos Quintanilla (1939-1940) and General Enrique Peñaranda (1940-1943).

The Catavi Massacre

The most significant event of this interlude was the strike at the Patiño tin mine at Catavi which exploded in violence on December 21, 1942, when some 700 troops and *carabineros* (national police) fired into an unarmed advancing mob of men, women and children. The gunfire killed—according to government figures—19 and injured 30. But Timoteo Pardo, the Catavi union leader, testified later that he had seen at least 400 bodies buried, some still alive. Opposition deputy Ricardo Anaya charged in the congressional inquiry of August and September 1943 that 700 had been killed and 400 wounded.[32]

Whatever the actual number of casualties, the Catavi incident became the *cause célèbre* which first brought Paz Estenssoro and the MNR into the national limelight, toppled Peñaranda's cabinet and led to the overthrow of Peñaranda himself on the first anniversary of the Catavi violence. It was a decisive turning

[31] *La Razón*, Aug. 24, 1939.
[32] *Ibid.*, Aug. 19 and 28, 1943.

point in Bolivian history and it launched the MNR on its tortured way to national power.[33]

The Catavi episode and a later congressional inquiry elicited much comment in *La Razón* and the other newspapers of La Paz. The Aramayo newspaper saw behind the desire of the Catavi miners to raise their daily wages from about 75 cents to $1.50 a day "the avid tentacles of communism."[34] When the striking workers first made their demands, *La Razón* was aghast:

> There [are no] reasons whatsoever properly social or economic that should induce the workers of the mines to strike. To understand this event, which is going to obstruct seriously the development of Bolivian production, one should look only at the fruits of the seed of disorganization and anarchy sown among the working masses by political elements which, in trying to obtain their secret ends, do not hesitate to endanger the internal peace of the nation and the life of its institutions.[35]

The one newspaper of the capital which supported the striking miners of Catavi, and which led efforts to get an inquiry into the subsequent violence, was *La Calle*, spokesman for the MNR. The three leading dailies of La Paz, all spokesmen for the Big Three mining interests, presented a united front against plainly modest demands by labor during a wartime boom that yielded their companies exceptionally high profits. It was *La Calle* which printed the MNR's denunciation of the Catavi affair and which kept the matter open until the congressional investigation was finally called in August 1943.[36]

La Razón's reaction to the inquiry itself, which lasted from August 18 to September 10, 1943, was characteristic:

> Demagoguery, upon opening parliamentary fire against two ministers of state [Government and Labor], flaunting a sad event as a banner of false proletarian vindication, an event of which they themselves [the MNR] and their claques are alone responsible, is proceeding in its habitual manner. . . . If there is respect in the Bolivian parliament

[33] See Jerry W. Knudson, "The Impact of the Catavi Mine Massacre of 1942 on Bolivian Politics and Public Opinion," *The Americas, A Quarterly Review of Inter-American Cultural History*, 26:254-76 (January 1970).

[34] *La Razón*, Aug. 13, 1943.

[35] Dec. 16, 1942.

[36] *La Calle*, Dec. 31, 1942.

for the essence of our laws . . . interpellations will remain reduced to areas from which they emanate and . . . national politics will return to a style and honesty completely foreign to the vulgar jockeyings of those who see in [the Catavi violence] a *modus vivendi* and a platform for lowly aims.[37]

Time and time again, *La Razón* denounced the investigation as a pretext for the satisfaction of personal egos and as desecrating the Catavi dead by using them for selfish and disruptive political ends. The newspaper defended the Army for having used force to put down disorder and advocated amending the Constitution of 1938 to outlaw all strikes.[38]

The Problem of the Campesinos

If *La Razón* took a dim view of worker demands, it dealt even more harshly with the *campesinos*, the Indian masses who make up the great bulk of Bolivia's population. In 1943 the newspaper attacked a proposal for extending liberal education to the Indians: "It is thought that the Indian should be educated by a humanistic and not a technical criterion, and from this absolute blindness that afflicts those charged with solving this problem can come serious damage to the country."[39] Again when the first Indian congress was held in La Paz in August 1943, *La Razón* denounced the event:

[In] this type of gathering demagogic elements always predominate, anxious to obtain political notice by any means. They bring together however many Indians perfectly ignorant of the meaning and scope of these meetings, and they induce them to sow complaints of all kinds and to formulate votes of protest against this or that, without logical foundation and without serious reasons. . . . [We have always repudiated] the political agitators who want to make of every Indian a doctor [of philosophy] who will claim and demand the redemption of his brothers.[40]

Such congresses, the newspaper continued, were planned and carried out by individuals who were not Indians and "are not

[37] Aug. 11, 1943.

[38] Aug. 12 and 19, 1943. For other editorial comment on the Catavi inquiry, see Aug. 13, 19, 21-23, 26, 28, 30 and Sept. 10-12, 1943.

[39] Jan. 30, 1943.

[40] Aug. 12, 1943.

interested in any way in helping the Indians, but only and exclusively for gaining a political platform which their scarce personal merits could never give them."[41] In short, the government should discourage such gatherings and jail agitators who already had caused *huelgas de brazos caídos* (passive resistance strikes) on some haciendas. Thus, as with the tin miners, *La Razón* found absolutely no common ground with the Bolivian Indian—in the world's most Amerindian nation. On the contrary, the Indian was to be kept submerged forever in the most discredited of colonial traditions. It should not be surprising that such men, peasants and miners, terrorized *La Razón* after the MNR revolution of 1952 and kept the newspaper from reopening.

The La Calle *Shutdown*

While *La Razón* upheld the *status quo* in Bolivia, the Peñaranda government took action to silence the opposition press by issuing on December 13, 1943, a decree which outlawed "extremist propaganda" against public order and the institutions of the state, or which fomented labor unrest.[42] *La Calle*, the MNR spokesman, clearly the target of the decree, was shut down four days later. The Patiño newspaper *El Diario* did not comment on the shutdown of *La Calle*, but the Hochschild organ, *Ultima Hora*, the most responsible of the oligarchical capital dailies, declared:

> There are those who believe that journalistic solidarity is an elastic concept that should be used with friends and repudiated with adversaries. It is, on the contrary—or should be—an absolute concept, lying beyond personal differences. In the name of that solidarity, we express our objection against the suspension of an organ of information [*La Calle*], because that wounds the very institution of the press. Whatever its ideology may be, every information organ translates the sentiment and thought of one sector of public opinion. The newspaper may be silenced, but that opinion will not disappear.[43]

La Razón, on the other hand, stressed the need for control of the press in wartime. Was the government to allow its dispensations to be the object of mockery? "The clash has been in-

[41] *Loc. cit.*
[42] *La Razón*, Dec. 14, 1943.
[43] *Ultima Hora*, Dec. 18, 1943.

evitable," the newspaper observed. "Thus, it has come about that the Cabinet has taken harsh measures. It is lamentable that [*La Calle*] has knowingly given occasion for this."[44] Hence, only one of the three major dailies of La Paz opposed the governmental seizure of *La Calle*. *La Razón*, which was to champion freedom of the press so ardently when it could not publish after 1952, did not extend that freedom to others in 1943. Conversely, the MNR—which knew from direct experience what suppression was like—also suppressed the press during the first few years of its own rule. Moreover, such repression seldom achieves its goal: on December 20, 1943, only three days after *La Calle* was closed, the Peñaranda government was overthrown by a combined MNR and liberal military revolt.

The Villarroel Regime

This "Revolution of the Majors" saw the installation of a reform military junta led by Major Gualberto Villarroel (1943-1946). *La Razón* faced a challenge to the hegemony of the great mining enterprises in Bolivian life even more dangerous than the tentative thrusts of Busch. When Villarroel called upon "the young military forces" to join in his movement for national renovation, *La Razón* declared such an alliance unconstitutional, similar to the alliance of soldiers and peasants in Russia in 1917. Forgetting its previous support of Peñaranda and other Army heads of state, *La Razón* argued that the military should be strictly non-political.[45] On only one point could the Aramayo newspaper agree with Villarroel during the early months of his rule. It quoted him out of context as saying that Bolivia should not "disperse its activity in reform experiments." Villarroel was actually calling for substantial, not token, reforms but *La Razón* mistakenly agreed that "attempts at reform . . . have thus far been a genuine scourge for the whole country."[46]

The opposition mining press continued to flay the social program of Villarroel, who declared in 1945, "I am more the friend of the poor than enemy of the rich." Attacks became so severe that the ineffective reform government finally seized both *La*

[44] Dec. 18, 1943.
[45] Jan. 22, 1944.
[46] Jan. 24, 1944.

Razón and *Ultima Hora* after the two newspapers had stirred up an abortive *coup d'etat* on June 13, 1946. The change in *La Razón*'s editorial policy after its confiscation was startling. For example, the newspaper urged great increases in workers' wages so that more money from the mining industry would remain in the country to build a wider national market. Confiscated or not, it seemed strange to hear *La Razón* saying, "Since the colonial epoch, a river of silver has flowed from our mines to Europe, while in this country there remained only holes in the mountains and holes in the lungs of the miners."[47]

There is no doubt that the elite opposition press, incited by *La Razón*, was instrumental in overthrowing the Villarroel regime. On July 21, 1946, the corpse of the unfortunate president was hanged from a lamppost in the Plaza Murillo, along with those of several of his aides and Roberto Hinojosa, the MNR propagandist who had written two books glorifying Adolf Hitler. The reactionary press gloated over the role it had played in toppling Villarroel. *La Razón* proclaimed, "The newspapermen who from the tribune of 'La Razón' were the promoters of the uprising, were defending liberty of thought and pointing out the road of rebellion to the people."[48] *Ultima Hora* added, "Whoever believes that the movement of July 21 was unexpected . . . is in error. That movement was prepared by the press."[49] *La Razón* asserted later, "The government of Villarroel committed an error that eventually was to become fatal: it gave temporary liberty to the press."[50]

There is other evidence that the mining company press played a direct role in the downfall of Villarroel 38 days after the confiscation of *La Razón* and *Ultima Hora*. In the attempted *coup d'etat* of June 13, *La Razón* printed broadsides urging La Paz mobs to seize Villarroel with the injunction, "Leave no one alive!"[51] When the teachers' strike and student demonstrations reached their peak on July 21, *La Razón* workers rushed to the

[47] July 2, 1946.

[48] Aug. 23, 1946.

[49] Aug. 10, 1946.

[50] Jan. 1, 1947. See also Guillermo Bedregal, *La revolución boliviana, sus realidades y perspectivas dentro del ciclo de liberación de los pueblos latinoamericanos* (La Paz, 1962), 23-4.

[51] Carlos Montenegro, *Culpables* (La Paz, 1955), 36.

newspaper building and seized it from pro-government forces. In a self-incriminating feat of journalistic prowess, these workers had an extra on the streets—distributed free—on the very afternoon of the revolt. Seven lines of banner headlines proclaimed: "UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ONCE MORE RECONQUER THE WIDEST LIBERTY FOR THE BOLIVIAN PEOPLE; THE COWARDLY TYRANNY THAT MASSACRED WOMEN AND CHILDREN HAS BEEN CRUSHED BY ALL OF THE HEROIC PEOPLE." Lesser headlines read: "Torrents of blood were shed by the regime in its desire to continue its domination."[52]

Moreover, *La Razón* became a handmaiden to the new government just as it had served the oligarchical regimes before the reform interlude of Villarroel. Immediately after his overthrow, the newspaper sent bundles of its latest editions to various parts of Bolivia by airplane to help consolidate the new regime. *La Razón*'s editorial position concerning the new government was emphatic: the Aramayo newspaper declared that the Army would return to its traditional mission of maintaining public order and defending Bolivia's frontiers "rather than placing its sword at the disposal of bastard interests."[53]

In the six years between 1946 and 1952, the Bolivian center and right fought with increasing difficulty to maintain coalition governments that would stave off a return to power by the dreaded MNR. The men who ruled from the Palace of Government during this time of instability and repression were essentially supporters of the *status quo:* Tomás Monje Gutiérrez (1946-1947), Enrique Hertzog Garaizabal (1947-1949) and Mamerto Urriolagoitia (1949-1951). These men especially feared a renewed alliance between the MNR and the Bolivian military or national police. Support by the *carabineros* was in fact decisive in finally toppling *la rosca* in April 1952.[54]

The 1951 Elections

Renewed labor violence at Catavi and elsewhere in 1949, which

[52] *La Razón*, July 21, 1946.

[53] *Ibid.*, July 24 and 25, 1946.

[54] Alfredo Ayala Z., *Historia de Bolivia, Tomo VI, Bolivia en el siglo XX, del liberalismo a la segunda república* (La Paz, 1968), 271-310.

plunged Bolivia into brief civil war, provided more grist for the MNR propaganda mill. The party had planned to seize power by capitalizing on scattered labor strikes, but the effort failed, primarily because of lack of communication and coordination. Unable to gain power through armed struggle, the MNR prepared for the elections of 1951, which the party did not expect to win. As the MNR presidential candidate Paz Estenssoro commented later, "We never believed that we could attain power through elections. Nevertheless, we considered it necessary and opportune for the Party to join in the elections because . . . that would permit a formal triumph as a step toward a revolutionary seizure of power."[55]

As the elections of 1951 approached, *La Razón* lashed out at the MNR because of the nationalist group's unceasing propaganda attacks against "the mining super-state" which the MNR claimed conducted all of Bolivia's affairs. *La Razón* vehemently denied this allegation. The newspaper, owned and directed by the Aramayo tin-mining family, blandly replied that "the Bolivian mining industry does not exercise, nor try to exert, any political power."[56]

Six candidates took part in the fragmented elections of May 6, 1951, in which Paz Estenssoro received the greatest number of votes, but not—according to the incumbent government—the necessary absolute majority. *La Razón* was appalled at the strong showing of the MNR, which the newspaper had been doing its utmost to discredit since 1946. The stand-off should have been resolved by congressional decision, but *La Razón* opposed any decision favorable to the MNR:

> Through the ruinous splintering of the other political parties, a national majority—relative or absolute—has expressed its confidence in the same party [the MNR] that only five years ago was dramatically expelled from power, that agitated, before and afterwards, for the open resistance of great sectors of opinion, and that merited the severe and unanimous criticism of the national press.[57]

Under such pressure from all sides, Mamerto Urriolagoitia on

[55] Víctor Paz Estenssoro, *Mensaje a la VI convención del MNR* (La Paz, 1953), 10.

[56] May 3, 1951.

[57] May 10, 1951.

May 16, 1951, handed the Bolivian government over to a ten-man military junta led by General Hugo Ballivián Rojas and fled to Chile. This defection created a new word in the Bolivian vocabulary—a *mamertazo* which would provoke the ultimate armed rebellion of April 1952 at a cost of more than 600 lives.

Paz Estenssoro was installed as president after the successful April revolution. He refused to give *La Razón* any protection when it was menaced by angry mobs. Guillermo Céspedes, the newspaper's editor, repeatedly asked Minister of Government César Aliaga for police protection and was repeatedly refused. Hugo Roberts Barragán, chief of the newly created Ministry of Propaganda, angrily informed foreign newsmen that "memories of the dead and the wounded are too fresh" for the MNR regime to protect *La Razón* against popular outbursts. The government unpadlocked the newspaper's plant, but when *La Razón* attempted to publish on April 17, mob pressure and terrorism were renewed. Three station wagons cruised around the newspaper's editorial offices after midnight, full of men shouting, "*La Razón* will die! The revolution will live!"[58]

Paz Estenssoro was quoted by the New York *Times* as saying on April 19 that the Bolivian government would not assist *La Razón* to reopen because it was "an enemy of the Bolivian people." The president asserted there was nothing to prevent the newspaper from publishing, but doing so would be like "waving a red banner before a revolutionary populace which has thus far shown great restraint by refraining from pillage and unnecessary violence." Paz Estenssoro announced that he and other MNR leaders planned to sue *La Razón* for libel and calumny, and he declared, "I am not going to shoot the people to defend Aramayo."[59] Finally, in the middle of June 1952, *La Razón* dismissed its 300 employees, who had been idle but on the payroll for two and a half months, and closed down completely.[60]

Meanwhile, *Los Tiempos* of Cochabamba stepped up its attacks on the MNR regime, declaring it had no right to judge its own constitutionality and calling for new elections. Publisher Demetrio Canelas wrote that "statements made by some revolu-

[58] New York *Times*, April 19, 1952.
[59] April 20, 1952.
[60] *Newsweek*, June 23, 1952.

tionary ministers encourage the belief that it is in their minds not to act as a constitutional government but as a revolutionary committee. . ."[61] In early February of 1953 the Federation of Factory Workers asked the MNR government to expropriate *Los Tiempos.* The union charged that the newspaper was "anti-worker" and "anti-nationalist" by reporting friction between Paz Estenssoro and Juan Lechín Oquendo, Minister of Mines and Petroleum. *Los Tiempos* also described some government elements as "infantile" and printed a series of editorials against nationalization of the tin mines, agrarian reform and universal suffrage. Putting down an attempted counter-revolt on November 9, 1953, mobs seized the printing plant of *Los Tiempos.* For his part in the subversion, the MNR arrested and imprisoned Demetrio Canelas, who was released and deported on December 22. After an amnesty was granted, Canelas returned to Bolivia in September 1956, but he was exiled again when he presented a bill to the MNR government for damage allegedly done to his newspaper.[62]

[61] New York *Times,* April 27, 1952.

[62] Robert J. Alexander, *The Bolivian National Revolution* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1958), 235.

The IAPA Intervenes

When the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) met in Mexico City October 7-11, 1953, the organization of newspaper publishers, editors and writers declared that freedom of the press did not exist in Bolivia.[63] Founded in 1926 and reorganized in 1950, the IAPA had established a committee on freedom of the press in 1946, a group which was appointed each year by the incoming president.[64] Committee chairman Jules Dubois of the Chicago *Tribune* sent a letter to Paz Estenssoro in 1953 asking guarantees for newsmen and freedom for newspapers in Bolivia to import newsprint. José Fellmann Velarde of the Ministry of Press, Information and Culture replied that exiled Bolivian newsmen had participated in conspiracies against the government. He pointed out that IAPA had never intervened against oligarchical regimes when newspapers were closed and newsmen "killed, imprisoned, tortured and exiled." Moreover, Fellmann Velarde argued, the newsprint restrictions—as well as those on food and other goods—were necessary to protect Bolivia's rapidly dwindling balance of payments.[65] (It is true that the governmental organ *La Nación* itself suffered from lack of newsprint and was forced at times to go to tabloid size.) Nevertheless, the IAPA compared the plight of *La Razón* to that of *La Prensa* of Buenos Aires, which was shut down in 1951 by Juan Domingo Perón, and accused the MNR government of "an act of aggression against the free and independent press."[66]

Thereupon began a vendetta between the Bolivian revolutionary government and the IAPA that was to last two decades. The international association refused to concede that freedom of the press existed in Bolivia as long as *La Razón* could not publish

[63] New York *Times*, Oct. 6, 1953.

[64] Mary A. Gardner, *The Inter American Press Association: Its Fight for Freedom of the Press, 1926-1960* (Austin, 1967), 159.

[65] New York *Times*, Oct. 18, 1953.

[66] *Newsweek*, June 2, 1952.

and *Los Tiempos* was not indemnified. The Bolivian authorities, on the other hand, disputed the right of the IAPA to sit in judgment, since they contended it was composed of the entrepreneurs of the press, not the workers. Judgments of the IAPA committee on freedom of the press, the MNR maintained, were made only upon hearsay from other newspaper owners and not by proper investigations on the scene. Moreover, in the case of *Los Tiempos*, publisher Demetrio Canelas himself was a member of the IAPA committee, therefore being both judge and party to the cause. Concerning *La Razón*, the Bolivian revolutionary government steadfastly refused to admit that the Aramayo newspaper plant in downtown La Paz had been nationalized, although the building did become the headquarters of the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum.

The plight of *La Razón*'s former workers became the concern of the first National Congress of Workers called in 1955 by the *Central Obrera Boliviana* (COB), the fledgling national labor organization. The congress proposed to the MNR government that *La Razón* be expropriated since its "voluntary closure" had left 300 workers jobless. But the MNR refused, according to its official newspaper *La Nación*, "precisely because it [the government] knew that proceeding to such an expropriation, even though all of the legal requisites were fulfilled, would be exploited as a sign of repression of liberty of the press."[67]

When the IAPA placed Bolivia on the condemned list year after year, *La Nación* warned:

> Our readers should remember that the *Sociedad Interamericana de Prensa* [IAPA] is an entity which groups together the proprietors of newspapers of almost all the countries of this hemisphere, which is the same as saying the capitalists who manage the editorial industry . . . from a point of view purely utilitarian. The conclusions or pronouncements of the committee on freedom of the press of IAPA have to be, inevitably, the result of reports of their own members—also owners—and . . . many of those informants are at the same time active politicians who are not able to escape from the passion, hatred or prejudice with which they see affairs from their respective viewpoints.[68]

In 1958 when the IAPA at its meeting in Buenos Aires declared

[67] *La Nación*, Oct. 23, 1955.
[68] March 24, 1958.

that freedom of the press still did not exist in Bolivia, *La Nación* commented: "It's curious. It is presently happening, as rarely came about in the history of this country, that the great majority of the spokesmen for journalism are independent or averse to the politics of the Government and who say what they desire on the spur of the moment, without restrictions of any kind." Indignant, the official newspaper continued, "they are passionate in their language, [inflicting] injury and calumny against the regime, which tolerates them patiently. What greater liberty can one ask?" *La Nación* described the IAPA as a "capitalist consortium" which did "not defend an idea [freedom of the press] but rather an economic position."[69]

The Bolivian revolutionary government steadfastly defended its position against the repeated strictures of the IAPA. On another occasion, *La Nación* observed: "The IAPA does not know, or pretends not to know, that after April 9, 1952, the daily *La Razón* stopped appearing only through the will of its proprietor, fearing certain reactions of the people, to be sure. . . But at no time was the plant of *La Razón* threatened, let alone confiscated, by the Government, making it impossible 'to make restitution' of that which is in the hands of its own owner." The MNR newspaper pointed out that in the previous six years, Carlos Víctor Aramayo had made no gesture to reopen his newspaper, nor need he obtain government approval to do so. "Nevertheless," *La Nación* concluded, "nothing of this sort has occurred because the oligarchy obtains greater advantages from the silence of *La Razón*, which permits it to agitate against the Government" in the court of international public opinion.[70]

Actually, Aramayo tried to reopen *La Razón* on two occasions but was prevented both times from doing so by "spontaneous popular demonstrations in the streets." The Bolivian people had been outraged by *La Razón*'s justifications of the massacres at Catavi in 1942 and at Uncía, Villa Victoria and again Catavi in 1949. The Aramayo newspaper aided the *mamertazo* of 1951, *La Nación* charged, publishing falsified documents of an alleged pact connecting the MNR and the Bolivian Workers Federation with the Communist Party, which triggered the military take-

[69] Oct. 11 and 12, 1958.
[70] Oct. 16, 1958.

over. After the revolution of 1952, Aramayo offered to let Paz Estenssoro name a new director for *La Razón,* suggesting Wálter Montenegro, but the MNR refused, saying there were no obstacles to resumed publication and declining to intervene in the internal affairs of the newspaper. *La Nación* drily recalled that the ill-fated newspaper had applauded the closing of *LaCalle,* spokesman of the MNR, in 1942 and the closing of an independent daily of the left, *La Noche,* property of Gustavo Chacón, in 1949.[71]

In 1959 *La Nación* noted with dismay that Bolivia was once again blacklisted, yet the IAPA declared that there was freedom of the press under the regime of Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua. On that occasion, *La Nación* welcomed the creation of *Agencia de Prensa Latinoamericana* (Latin American Press Agency) which was to start functioning under Cuban direction within several weeks, even though the newspaper had been lukewarm to the Cuban revolution.[72]

Augusto Céspedes, as editor of *La Nación,* delighted in taking swipes at Jules Dubois, chairman of the IAPA committee on freedom of the press, when *La Razón* and *Los Tiempos* first went under. Céspedes wrote in 1959, "When the Cuban Revolution . . . did not threaten to be more than one of the inoffensive exultations of the Caribbean, Jules Dubois found in Castro—who is now an enemy of 'liberty'—a savior, a great democrat and the expulsor of a tyrant."[73] Another victim of Céspedes' trenchant pen was Argentine publisher Alberto Gainza Paz of *La Prensa,* large-scale cattle rancher and subsequent president of the IAPA. Céspedes referred to the IAPA as "constituted by retired colonels and bovine oligarchies that mix news the same way they breed cattle."[74]

Time and again the MNR government urged representatives of the IAPA to visit Bolivia to see for themselves whether or not freedom of the press existed there. In 1959 Carlos Morales Guillén, Minister of Government, invited William H. Cowles, then president of the IAPA, to make such an inspection tour. But Céspedes noted sardonically, "If Cowles comes—a very dif-

[71] March 11, 1959.
[72] June 3, 1959.
[73] Oct. 3, 1959.
[74] *La Nación,* July 19, 1959.

ficult thing—this has to be his verdict: Bolivia is a dictatorship and *señor* [Jorge] Carrasco [publisher of *El Diario*] lives with a militia bayonet pointed against his chest, although those inconveniences do not stop him from preparing editorial coups as interesting as that of April 19." (This referred to the most serious attempted counter-revolt against the MNR, organized by the extreme rightwing *Falange Socialista Boliviana,* FSB, Bolivian Socialist Falange.) No, Céspedes saw quite another outcome: "On the contrary, Cowles will repeat his nefarious report, Colonel Dubois will continue writing cretin chronicles for the Chicago *Tribune,* Gainza Paz will continue selling cows and newspapers, the great defenders of freedom of the press will keep on getting fatter and, once again, President Eisenhower will appear intrigued by the inexplicable Latin American bad will against his country. . ."[75]

Significantly, when the Interamerican Congress of Working Journalists met in Lima August 18-22, 1960—a meeting not covered by the American wire services—this group of newsmen pronounced against infringements on freedom of expression in Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Paraguay but—unlike the IAPA—did not find cause for alarm in Bolivia.[76] When the Interamerican Federation of Professional Journalists was formed at that meeting, *La Nación* applauded the action. The newspaper noted that for the IAPA "the economic anguishes and social disadvantages that grieve the worker of the press [in Latin America] were always far off."[77] Again, when Pope John XXIII criticized the capitalist press for biased coverage of underdeveloped countries, *La Nación* took advantage of the occasion to lash the IAPA once more for having the audacity to set up "a kind of permanent Inquisition" that takes upon itself the task of judging Latin American people without "any investigation whatever."[78]

The official press of the Bolivian National Revolution did not attempt to paint an unblemished picture of the relationship between government and opposition newspapers there. In 1960,

[75] *Ibid.,* Dec. 4, 1959.
[76] *Ibid.,* Aug. 20 and 24, 1960.
[77] *Ibid.,* Aug. 25, 1960.
[78] Dec. 14, 1959. See also Dec. 18, 1959.

when the IAPA meeting in Buenos Aires declared that freedom of the press existed in Argentina but not in Bolivia, *La Nación* quoted two Cochabamba newspapers by way of refutation. The independent *El Mundo* dismissed as pure fantasy the IAPA report that "the [Bolivian] government controls the newspapers and the opposition lacks means of expression." The Cochabamba newspaper admitted that the MNR government owned such newspapers as *La Nación* and *La Tarde* of La Paz and *El Pueblo* of Cochabamba, but the majority of newspapers were either independent or in the opposition. *El Mundo* also agreed that freedom of the press did not exist in Bolivia during the first few years of the revolution, as when *El Diario* of La Paz appeared with blank columns to symbolize MNR censorship, but "it is false to say that all of the dailies that now circulate in our country belong to the Government of the MNR." *El Pueblo*, the MNR newspaper in Cochabamba, noted the irony in the IAPA's deciding that freedom of the press did exist in Argentina pointing out that on the very day that the organization was assembling there, the government of Arturo Frondizi closed down *La Razón* of Buenos Aires and imprisoned its editor. Moreover, *El Pueblo* maintained, 90 percent of the radio outlets in Argentina were controlled by the government and four million *peronistas* not only did not have a single newspaper spokesman but also could not even vote.[79]

The case of *La Razón* of La Paz was never settled to the owner's or IAPA's satisfaction, but the circumstances surrounding the closing of *Los Tiempos* in Cochabamba were even more controversial. The morning daily was founded by Demetrio Canelas on September 16, 1943. It survived the 1952 revolution for 19 months even though Canelas fought the MNR governmental reforms every inch of the way. But on November 9, 1953, *Los Tiempos* closed down after a violent confrontation. What happened?

Lee Hills, former president of the IAPA, gave this version in 1969: "The late Demetrio Canelas, of Los Tiempos, Cochabamba, Bolivia, saw his newspaper destroyed by government-

[79] *La Nación*, Oct. 31, 1960. For other criticism of the IAPA, see also May 23 and 31, and Nov. 16, 1958; Oct. 6, 7, 10 and 30, and Dec. 4 and 9, 1959; Feb. 25, and Aug. 23 and 28, 1960; and Oct. 23, 24 and 28, 1962.

inspired mobs, and then he was thrown in prison and threatened with execution as a traitor for not bowing editorially to the government. IAPA protests saved him."[80]

But the MNR spokesman *La Nación* gave quite a different account in 1959, relying on a dispatch from Cochabamba by its correspondent Julián Cayo. This newsman, sifting the evidence six years after the event, reported that *Los Tiempos* had not been "destroyed" at all. Two line casting machines were not injured while a third and the press itself were damaged only slightly and were functional again after light repairs. In fact, Canelas' "destroyed" press was first sold to *Crítica of* Cochabamba, then to *Crónica* of the same city, and finally to *Progreso* of Santa Cruz, where it continued in service.

Cayo reconstructed the events of November 9, 1953. That morning, he said, the people of Cochabamba were told by radio that a counter-revolution led by the FSB had broken out in their city. The rebels used the *Los Tiempos* building as their citadel. After the noon hour, the plant of *Los Tiempos* was taken by MNR-controlled students against machine-gun fire from the building. The students were about to issue the first issue of *El Proletario* when mobs of *campesinos* invaded and occupied the building. On November 10 the student group, *Avanzada Universitaria,* again gained control of the building for four hours. It was they who reported that the equipment had been damaged only lightly. Some 50 workers lost their lives putting down the attempted counter-revolt.

The MNR correspondent found it ironic that Canelas had used illiterate peons to carry his editorials from his nearby estate of Pucara to Cochabamba. They were "innocent porters of editorials which argued that it was necessary to perpetuate the order of a powerful bossism." Cayo charged that Canelas had conspired openly with the Rural Federation of Landowners to bring about the attempted counter-revolt of November 9, 1953, charging that the publisher had no social conscience whatsoever. He had used *pongos* (serfs) both in his country house and in the plant of *Los Tiempos* itself, where they could be seen "running like souls in pain to fulfill the domestic commands of the *patrón.*"

[80] Lee Hills, "The Story of the IAPA," *Nieman Reports,* Vol. 23, No. 1 (March 1969), 6.

The MNR writer concluded, "dressed in coarse flannel, wearing sandals, the *campesinos* watched terrified the operation of the Linotypes and the press which was publishing the newspaper that was inciting repression of the agrarian revolution underway."[81]

The IAPA received quite a different version of these events, which silenced the newspaper with the second largest circulation in Bolivia (after *La Razón*). In 1962, for example, Samuel Mendoza, last editor of the newspaper before it went under in 1953, told the IAPA meeting in Santiago de Chile that *Los Tiempos* had been assaulted by the MNR because the newspaper had denounced Communist infiltration in the government. It was also revealed at the 1962 meeting that the IAPA had been studying the possibility of guaranteeing a loan for the acquisition of new equipment for *Los Tiempos*, a project which was later abandoned.[82] Finally, at the 1969 meeting of the IAPA in Washington, D.C., it was announced that the civilian government of Luis Adolfo Siles Salinas in Bolivia had appointed a commission to ascertain the amount of damage suffered by *Los Tiempos*,[83] but the Canelas family never received payment of damages.

[81] *La Nación*, Oct. 16 and 20, 1959. For other comments on the case of *Los Tiempos*, see also March 24 and 25, 1955; Aug. 27-31, 1957; May 28, Oct. 11, and Dec. 25, 1958; Aug. 17 and 24, Sept. 1, and Oct. 9, 1959; Feb. 13, March 10, May 12 and 22, and Oct. 19, 1960; and Feb. 24 and Oct. 21, 1961.

[82] [IAPA], *XVIII Annual Meeting, October, 1962* (Mexico City, 1963), 160-69.

[83] [IAPA], *XXV Annual Meeting, October, 1969* (Mexico City, 1970), 161-2. Also, letter to author from James B. Canel, general manager, IAPA, June 27, 1972.

An Established Revolutionary Press

When the Bolivian social revolution was consolidated within a few years after the 1952 revolt, repression of the press was discontinued—unlike Cuba, where the official *Granma* became the only newspaper allowed to publish. Since the press in Bolivia had initiated or fanned so many attempted or successful *coups d'etat* in the past, such early repression was undoubtedly seen as necessary if the MNR government was to maintain itself in power long enough to launch large-scale reforms.

Thereafter, the official press of Bolivia, led by *La Nación*, attempted to outshout rather than to silence opposition newspapers. *La Nación* was constantly answering attacks upon the MNR government by the former spokesmen for the mining interests, *El Diario* and *Ultima Hora*, or the conservative Catholic newspaper *Presencia*. The effect on the credibility in the press can only be guessed, but in 1958 a man from Curahara de Carangas, an Indian village on the *altiplano*, appeared on the streets of La Paz urging a four-point program, the last of which was, "People should read the evangelists in place of the newspapers. . ."[84]

Despite criticism of the official press, its managers defended its pro-MNR propaganda. After all, was not the old socially stratified system more lop-sided with the monopoly press of the Big Three mine-owners dominating the scene? As Fellmann Velarde wrote, "The oligarchy governed this country not only through economic exploitation and political despotism, but also by influencing in public opinion a mentality favorable to its interests and elevating false values in order to make that opinion serve them." In place of the oligarchy's "docile pen-wielders," Fellmann Velarde urged a vigorous nationalist press serving a cause. "In the national revolution," he declared, "from the beginning the press has played a preponderant role. Its part has

[84] *La Nación*, July 18, 1958.

not been limited to informing [readers], free from restraints, about . . . events. It has assumed the role of [a guide] documenting the diverse processes of organizing the country, after the political and social changes resulting from the fall of the old regime, which was sinking upon fragile foundations of oppression and injustice."[85]

But, asked the critics of *La Nación*, where does journalism end and propaganda begin? One of the most keenly debated points in this discussion was between the Scylla of sterile objectivity and the Charybdis of blind partisanship. In a seminar held in Venezuela in 1960, *La Nación* reported, United States delegates upheld the "cult of objectivity" while Venezuelan participants stressed the "social obligations" of journalism. *La Nación*'s own view was that: "The great task of the continent has to be . . . the construction of an independent journalism in the hands of the journalists in order to replace the present capitalist and oligarchical press that serves only to deform rather than inform and that acts in all cases in the service of reactionary interests."[86]

La Nación, official spokesman for the revolutionary government from 1952 to the overthrow of the MNR by the military on November 4, 1964, never attempted to gloss over its official status nor its forthright efforts to propagate the revolution from the printed page. When Carlos Montaño Daza, who had been writing editorial commentaries, left *La Nación* in 1956 at the end of Paz Estenssoro's first term in office, he noted: "From him [Paz Estenssoro] came the initiative of creating this column to reflect—in great part—the thought of the chief of the executive branch with respect to the delicate problems of the country, attempting to procure practical and immediate solutions." More significantly, the writer added, "A chief of a modern state should have permanent contacts with the opinion of his people; that is, he should exercise [a role in] journalism as President Paz Estenssoro has done, inspiring, pointing out conditions, correcting errors and, in every moment, fertilizing patriotism with the faith of a mystic and the prominence of a man of action."[87] On another occasion, the newspaper defended its position in an editorial: "*La Nación*

[85] May 12, 1955.
[86] June 20, 1960.
[87] Aug. 5, 1956.

. . . is honored in meriting the name of 'official press' and . . . deplores the weakness of those who, in order to solve momentary situations or superficial problems, indulge in the convenient expedient of taking exception to the 'officialism' of the MNR by resolutions, communications or [appeals to] public opinion."[88]

Others were not unhappy with a partially controlled press, but rather with the way in which it was controlled. As a petition to President Siles Zuazo asked in 1958, "Does the press of the Party constitute a centralizing guidepost, [a source] of equilibrium, a factor in comprehension and understanding . . .?" It answered: "No. The press of the party finds itself horrendously isolated, and it is no longer the tribune of a common cause but rather the scene of individual rancors, unloosed passions and unrestrained appetites."[89]

Despite such internecine squabbling, which caused *La Nación* to have almost as many editors as its twelve years of existence, the newspaper was the major domestic propaganda arm of the government. Even if *La Nación* could not reach the illiterate or barely literate masses (the first newspaper in Quechua was not published until the regime of General Juan José Torres in 1971), it aimed at the vital middle sector of the MNR. There was also considerable secondary circulation. Newspapers are still posted on the walls of some buildings in downtown La Paz, where readers inform their less fortunate fellows. Ultimately, the concepts espoused by *La Nación* found their way into the common vocabulary, spreading by word of mouth among unsophisticated but enthusiastic supporters of the revolution.

Nevertheless, an official, established revolutionary press was a permanent threat to the surviving traditional press of Bolivia. The MNR, faced with frequent crises during the first years of the revolution, justified censorship then on the grounds of national self-preservation. As *La Nación* commented in 1958, "It has been the press, in many cases, which [by] magnifying some facts, distorting others, . . . has provoked, indirectly if you wish, the outbursts of violence that figure among the causes [of] the difficulties in which [the country] finds itself."[90]

[88] Jan. 8, 1958.
[89] *La Nación*, April 28, 1958.
[90] Sept. 30, 1958.

Even after the repression was modified by Siles Zuazo, president from 1956 to 1960, warnings were issued frequently to the opposition press. In 1956, for example, *La Nación* declared:

> . . . the liberty of the press, enunciated and practiced without limitations by the Government of the National Revolution [imposes] the responsibility of the journalists of opposition. The moment in which a press disaffected toward the government uses calumny and irresponsibility as political weapons, it is subject to the sanctions of the existing legislation and it cannot allege innocence. Only a responsible press . . . can demand liberty.[91]

Again and again *La Nación* struck this note, as when it warned in 1957: "Liberty of opinion is a right that imposes, as with every right, complementary duties. He who knows how to express himself in decorous and respectful terms has the liberty to make opinion. . . . When he descends to the plane of injury and obscenity, he loses automatically the right to judge." In the same issue, columnist Tomás Catari concluded: "There is a limit to tolerance in the face of insult, provocation and lies."[92] Such heavy hints were dropped in a context of continual threats of violence against the MNR. Carlos Víctor Aramayo, for example, was called "the intellectual and financial instigator of permanent conspiracy." The former owner of *La Razón*, plotting from Chile, was charged with backing the serious FSB attempted *coup d'etat* of April 19, 1959.[93]

Eventually political passions cooled down, however, and the MNR government could be less edgy about its critics. In 1962 Paz Estenssoro called the La Paz journalists to his office to lecture them for more than an hour on the freedom and social responsibilities of the press. He told the reporters and editors that there was in Bolivia "liberty of the press in unrestricted form, and no one suffers imprisonment or is restrained for causes of that kind." Yet *La Nación* still carried a big stick. The newspaper was soon warning owners of the opposition press:

> The liberty of the press should be used exclusively for the public good, for the collective fertility, and not to stir anarchy. And no one in a

[91] Aug. 22, 1956.
[92] May 24, 1957.
[93] *La Nación*, April 23, 1959.

Democracy can control the conduct of the press except the press itself, making sure that the proprietors and conductors of the journalistic organs maintain themselves along the salutary lines of order and law.[94]

With such nudges here and there, the official Bolivian press gained wider latitude to concentrate on its own propaganda effort. The concept of propaganda which *La Nación* and other agencies embraced was, couched in the simplest terms, informing the Bolivian people, with the equally important goal of creating a favorable international image for the Bolivian National Revolution. "As persons we are not only what we believe ourselves to be," *La Nación* once observed, "but also what the surrounding world thinks of us and sees in us."[95]

Thus, the MNR had come a long way from the Jew-baiting of its early days with *La Calle,* when both the party and its organ were blacklisted by the United States during the Villarroel regime.[96] In its formative years the MNR had to deny Fascist connections; after gaining power in 1952 it had to fight off Communist labels. When such doubts were laid to rest, the United States assisted the Bolivian revolution with more aid per capita than any other country in the world.[97] This resulted from an informed diplomacy and the support of Milton Eisenhower, but it also may be termed an achievement of MNR propagandists, some of the most articulate and persuasive of whom were dispatched to foreign capitals to paint a favorable picture of the revolution: Víctor Andrade to Washington, D.C., Carlos Montenegro to Santiago de Chile, Augusto Céspedes to Rome and Armando Arce to Lima, Bogotá and Mexico City.

On the home front, three agencies of the Bolivian government were instrumental in the propaganda effort. The Ministry of Education and Fine Arts made Quechua a second national language, scorned the word *indio* in favor of *campesino,* and sought to extend socially relevant education to the countryside. Under

[94] Oct. 6, 1962.

[95] April 8, 1957.

[96] Cole Blasier, "The United States, Germany, and the Bolivian Revolutionaries (1941-1946)," *The Hispanic American Historical Review,* Vol. 52, No. 1 (February 1972), 41.

[97] James W. Wilkie, *The Bolivian Revolution and U.S. Aid since 1952, Financial Background and Context of Political Decisions* (Los Angeles, 1969), 13. A total of 275.9 million dollars was disbursed by the U.S. through 1964.

Minister of Education Fernando Díez de Medina, the review *Cordillera* was started in 1956; previous reviews in Bolivia, such as *Khana*, had been ephemeral, with very limited circulations. The second agency, the *Alcaldía Municipal* (city government) published positive national classics and revolutionary documents in its *Biblioteca Paceña* (Library of La Paz) series. The third and most important agency was the Sub-Secretary of Press, Information and Culture (SPIC), raised to cabinet level during the first administration of Paz Estenssoro and headed by such men as Fellmann Velarde, Marcial Tamayo and Jacobo Libermann.

SPIC was discontinued when Siles Zuazo took office in 1956 but reorganized in 1958 with Fellmann Velarde, who had been director from 1952 to 1956, again in command. Upon his installation in 1958, Fellmann Velarde said, "I believe that the work of the office under my charge is not that of making propaganda in the sense of labelling ideals and persons as irreconcilably good or definitively bad, simply by their political affiliation, but rather . . . that of instructing without stridency and disseminating facts from an elevated plane and with dignity."[98] Author of the most acclaimed novel of the revolution, *La montaña de los ángeles* (The Mountain of Angels, 1958), Fellmann Velarde later published (in 1971) a chilling fantasy on the insensitivity of Alliance for Progress personnel.

When in 1955 SPIC dedicated the Oscar Pantoja mural on the outside wall of the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum, Paz Estenssoro pleaded for "neither a servile art, nor an evasive literature."[99] In addition to its publications, the agency promoted a series of conferences on "great national problems" such as nationalization of the mines, agrarian reform and inflation. The proceedings were published in the editorial pages of *La Nación*.[100]

SPIC worked with all means of communication—radio, publishing and the film—to get its revolutionary message across. The

[98] *La Nación*, Aug. 19, 1958.

[99] *La Nación*, Dec. 1, 1955. For an excellent discussion of this topic, see Murdo J. MacLeod, "The Bolivian Novel, the Chaco War, and the Revolution," in Malloy and Thorn, eds., *Beyond the Revolution*, 341-65.

[100] See, for example, "What is happening with the agrarian reform?" by Ernesto Ayala Mercado, *La Nación*, March 7, 1955.

first was deemed crucial since radio was regarded as "the talking book" for Bolivia's illiterate masses. Thus, in 1955, Radio Illimani, named for the magnificent mountain which broods over La Paz, was reorganized as a state-owned and -operated station. (It was not Bolivia's only voice, however; 16 radio stations were broadcasting in La Paz alone in 1971.) *La Nación* declared that Radio Illimani was primarily for the peasants, serving to tie them together "in order that the *campesino* knows the facts and data which vitally concern him." Radio, the MNR newspaper added, should be "the bond between the school, the university, the educated classes and the people, to the end of raising the cultural level of our majorities," a task which could not be accomplished by commercial radio.[101] Between 100,000 and 200,000 radio receivers were distributed among 5,000 *ayllus* or communal villages, which might have reached as many as two million listeners by *La Nación*'s estimate. Radio Illimani received new short-wave equipment for 10 kilowatts of power and later long-wave apparatus for 20 kilowatts, which was sufficient to reach all of the national territory. Under director Carlos Cervantes Monroy in 1958, Radio Illimani began offering 30 minutes a week to every political party without distinction as a means "of arriving at an effective political pacification which the country demands."[102]

Publishing, a chronically depressed economic activity in Latin America, presented a greater challenge. With an unstable political climate and relatively few readers, book press runs had been notoriously small. For example, Carlos Montenegro's *Nacionalismo y coloniaje,* the bellwether of the revolution, had appeared in two editions of only 1,000 copies each. Under the stimulus of the revolution, however, young Alfonso Tejerina founded a publishing house that issued Fellmann Velarde's biography, *Victor Paz Estenssoro: el hombre y la revolución,* in two editions totaling 40,000 copies that sold out completely. Although vanity publishing had been customary, publishers such as Editorial Juventud began paying Bolivian authors after 1952. Government propaganda agencies therefore received a boost from the private sector.

[101] *La Nación,* June 2, 1955.
[102] *Ibid.,* July 23 and Aug. 6, 1955, and Aug. 21, 1958.

La Editorial Canata, for example, brought out three volumes of the discourses of Paz Estenssoro without state subvention.[103]

As for the film medium, the *Consorcio Cinematográfico de Bolivia* offered such documentaries as "An Embrace across the Andes," depicting the state visit of Paz Estenssoro to neighboring Chile in 1955 to confer with General Carlos Ibáñez. The first film of the *Instituto Cinematográfico Boliviano* in 1958 showed the natural riches and human possibilities of the town of Rurrenabaque. The outstanding individual artist was director Jorge Ruiz, whose films on revolutionary themes included "Sebastiana Returns," "Voices of the Earth," "The Watershed" and "The First Ones."[104]

When SPIC was re-established in 1958, there was an outcry from the opposition press. "Similar governmental mechanisms," editorialized *El Diario,* "are used only by tyrannies and dictatorships that need to regiment the . . . press" whether through violence or more subtle means. *El Diario* denounced what it considered violations of freedom of the press by SPIC in its early years through "registration of journalists, concentration of news, [and] editing the same in intentional form and with propaganda objectives . . ." The newspaper denounced Fellmann Velarde as a Communist, while *Ultima Hora* compared his agency with that which flourished in the Argentine dictatorship of Perón.[105] *La Nación* replied that every organized democracy has a department of press and information, citing West Germany, whose agency's five-story building covered a city block.[106]

While the Bolivian revolutionary government implemented its own propaganda objectives, it also encouraged the professionalization and unionization of independent newsmen. For the first time in Bolivian history, a union of jouralists, *Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Prensa,* was founded on March 23, 1954. Previously there had existed only the old-guard Association of Journalists and newsmen's cells within the MNR. The new organization was a national union recognized by Paz Estenssoro

[103] *Ibid.,* June 30 and Sept. 4, 1955, and April 19, 1959.

[104] *Ibid.,* Sept. 6, 1955, and March 26, 1958. The work of Ruiz is discussed by Jorge Sanjinés Aramayo in *La Nación,* June 24, 1960.

[105] *El Diario,* Aug. 22, 1958; *Ultima Hora,* same date.

[106] *La Nación,* Nov. 11, 1958.

"with the ends of defense and struggle for the betterment of living and working conditions of its members." When the union was founded, *La Nación* commented, "The journalism of the Revolution has changed in tone and mentality; it is [now] the voice of the majorities."[107] The union itself proclaimed that "the foundation of this union was possible only after destroying the 'Curtain of Tin' that for so long had converted journalists into simple salaried scribes, annulling completely every social movement, every inquietude aimed at attaining the consideration and respect that not only journalists but the profession itself merits."[108] The organization, granted a house by the revolutionary government to use as a meeting place, successfully petitioned Paz Estenssoro to reinstate the press conferences begun during the government of Villarroel. That the union was not simply a creature of the state was evidenced by the fact that *La Nación* itself was soon experiencing labor difficulties.[109] In 1968 the journalists' union was incorporated into COB, the national labor organization.

Official journalism experienced defeats as well as victories. *La Tarde*, an afternoon daily established by the MNR in 1959 to draw readers away from the rightwing afternoon *Ultima Hora*, ceased publication in 1962.[110] But *La Nación* and its satelite press had accomplished their mission. As Paz Estenssoro, serving his second presidential term and contemplating his third, told the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., in October 1963:

> It should . . . not be surprising to find that a press which has fought the existence of the revolution with all the means at its disposal, and still continues to be in opposition, today no longer criticizes the revolution itself. Instead, today's criticism is directed at the way the revolution is being run. What has happened, in effect, is that the press today accepts the revolution as an inevitable fact of life.[111]

[107] March 2, 1955.
[108] *La Nación*, June 21, 1955.
[109] *Ibid.*, Aug. 20, 1955; March 21 and May 9, 1956.
[110] *U.S. Army Area Handbook for Bolivia* (Washington, D.C., 1963), 380.
[111] Paz Estenssoro, *Remarks*, 3.

A Postscript

EVEN THOUGH manipulation of the Bolivian press was successful in popularizing the MNR among civilians, no amount of propaganda could blunt the drive of the military to regain its traditional status. After 1952, civilian militias composed of miners and *campesinos* were formed as a counter-balance to the reduced military establishment. Both Paz Estenssoro and Siles Zuazo sought to domesticate the remaining military forces. "Civic action" programs were carried out by the reconstituted *déclasè* Army on the basis of technological and sociological training. Yet in 1964, when Paz Estenssoro decided that the revolution could not continue without his guidance, he was forced to accept popular Air Force General René Barrientos Ortuño as his vice-presidential running mate. Within four months of the third inauguration of Paz Estenssoro, however, he was overthrown by a military machine rebuilt by United States aid and training missions. In the closing days of his presidency, Paz Estenssoro reinstituted newspaper censorship to chill the effect of demonstrations by students against having their traditional University of San Andrés bypassed by a new technical school instituted by the president.[112]

Nevertheless, the overthrow of the MNR by the military on November 4, 1964, did not mean that the revolution had come to an end. The propaganda had taken root. Even though military factions sparred for control of political power after 1964, they did not attempt to dismantle the revolution. Nationalization of the mines, agrarian reform and universal suffrage remained. Although organized labor was persecuted, Barrientos resigned as co-chairman (with Alfredo Ovando Candia) of the military junta to submit himself to the Bolivian electorate in 1966. He won overwhelmingly. Barrientos maintained his charisma by

[112] William H. Brill, *Military Intervention in Bolivia: The Overthrow of Paz Estenssoro and the MNR* (Washington, D.C., 1967), 37.

constantly barnstorming the country to keep in touch with the *campesinos*, whose political loyalty was always open to question. After his death in a helicopter crash in April 1969, it was charged that the dashing general had paid $280,000 in 1965—more than the entire budget for the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum—to a United States public relations firm, Hamilton Wright Organization, Inc., to bolster his image.[113]

The death of Barrientos unleashed even more virulent factionalism within the Bolivian armed forces. His civilian vice-president, Luis Adolfo Siles, lasted only a few months before being ousted by Ovando, chief of staff of the Army, on September 26, 1969. A rather colorless figure, Ovando sought to rekindle the revolutionary mystique by nationalizing on October 17, 1969, the Gulf Oil concessions handed out by Barrientos. Then Juan José Torres, a younger Army officer dissatisfied with the progress in recovering the revolution, split the Army to overthrow Ovando on October 8, 1970. General Torres in turn became a captive of the non-democratic left by forcing out a 100-member Peace Corps contingent, allowing an unelected Popular Assembly to meet, and courting aid and assistance from the Communist bloc countries. In another *coup d'etat* costing more than 120 dead and 700 wounded, Torres was defeated on August 21, 1971, by rightwing Colonel Hugo Banzer Suárez, backed by the formerly bitter opponents of decades, the MNR and FSB.[114]

The position of newsmen in Bolivia during these military *gobiernos de turno* (governments by turn) was precarious and fraught with danger. Repression and violence were always just around the corner. On March 14, 1970, a bomb delivered to his home in a package killed Alfredo Alexander and his wife. Alexander was publisher of *Ultima Hora* and the tabloid *Hoy*, both of which had severely criticized the military regime of Ovando. In July 1970 police, allegedly without authorization by the government, severely beat the staff of the leftwing daily, *La Jornada*, co-directed by Ted Córdova-Claure, later to be press secretary to Torres and to suffer five bullet wounds in the overthrow of that

[113] Raúl Peña Bravo, *Hechos y dichos del general Barrientos*. (La Paz? 1971), 139.

[114] The writer attended every session of the Popular Assembly, June 22 to July 2, 1971, and also witnessed the overthrow of the Torres regime.

regime. A decree by Ovando on February 19, 1970, ordered all newspapers to devote one column an issue to commentaries by employees, a policy that was retained by the Banzer regime.[115]

The rebuilt military establishment did not need to rely as much upon propaganda support after 1964 as had the MNR. Official newspapers, such as the tabloid *El Nacional* which served Torres, continued to exist, but their tone was muted. Torres instead sought the support of *El Diario*, which had been put in the hands of its workers by militant students during the October 1970 *coup d'etat*. The journalists of *El Diario* agitated constantly during the ten-month rule by Torres for the government to grant them official cooperative status.[116] Perhaps they had been influenced by the recommendation of the second World Meeting of Journalists held in Baden, Austria, in 1960 that underdeveloped countries could best serve social change by cooperative ownership of newspapers, radio and television.[117]

This campaign by *El Diario* seemed successful when Ramiro Villarroel, Minister of Information, announced on June 28, 1971, that the Torres government had decided to make the newspaper a cooperative. On August 16, only five days before his overthrow, Torres reiterated that *El Diario* would be made a cooperative "within a short time."[118] The Popular Assembly had set up a seven-member board with representatives from various segments of labor to oversee the "ideological orientation" of the newspaper, which had become politically partisan since its confiscation. A note scrawled on a writing shelf of the press gallery at the Popular Assembly forecast: "*El Diario*, your days are numbered, your name will be *Granma*. We are sorry, but history demands it."

After the overthrow of Torres, however, the 67-year-old newspaper was returned to the Carrasco family. However, Jorge Carrasco declined to return to La Paz from his Peruvian exile "for reasons of health" and left the daily under the direction of Guillermo Céspedes Rivera. Meanwhile, *Presencia* reported that the Banzer regime had asked three prominent La Paz jour-

[115] New York *Times*, March 15 and July 19, 1970; *Presencia*, Aug. 24, 1971, and *Hoy*, Sept. 1, 1971.

[116] See *El Diario* for June 10-12, 18, 20-21 and 29-30, and July 2, 1971.

[117] *La Nación*, Jan. 8, 1961.

[118] *El Diario*, June 29, July 21 and Aug. 17, 1971.

nalists to edit the newspaper, all of whom refused flatly.[119] When *El Diario* resumed publication on September 3, 1971, the newspaper commented: "*El Diario* returns to its incessant task of fighting for the implementation of the great moral principles appropriate for every civilized people. We do it with neither hatred nor rancor but with the firm will of contributing, within the limit of our forces, to keeping the love of liberty always lighted."[120]

The fate of the Bolivian press—as the rapidly unfolding events of 1971 amply demonstrated—is still inextricably bound up with that of the nation itself. Radicalized by the National Revolution of 1952-1964, many Bolivian newsmen and other intellectuals have sought to place their work in the vanguard of the effort to bring greater social justice to their country. When Torres was in command, a conference on "Press and Revolution" was held in Cochabamba in July 1971 where many of the earlier ideas of socially committed writing first voiced in Bolivia by Montenegro and Céspedes were heard once again.

At that meeting, Alberto Bailey Gutiérrez, former head of the refashioned Ministry of Culture, Information and Tourism, declared that all means of communication within the country should be made into cooperatives to counteract the "capitalist trap imposed on the press," which separated ownership from the creative functions. Bailey asserted that Bolivian journalism was politically mature and could comprehend the anxieties of the proletarian classes. In similar vein, Daniel Rodríguez of the *El Diario* staff said, "Considering the dependency of our country, there cannot and should not exist an independent and impartial press." The Bolivian journalist, he added, had the duty "to constitute himself an agent of social change and to fight for the cooperativization of all means of communication to the masses as the first stage of this war to the death against imperialist oppression."[121] José Valdivia, executive secretary of the Radio and Television Workers union, maintained that under the capitalist system, "The workers of intellect are converted into mere technicians who are limited to their specific functions, converting themselves to a certain

[119] Sept. 1, 1971.
[120] Sept. 3, 1971.
[121] *El Diario*, July 22, 1971.

extent into sustainers of the existing order which has given them the privilege of not having to work with their hands."[122]

Desire to join in the national revolutionary cause was evident in other circles as well. The First Encounter of Committed Poets, held in Oruro in July 1971, issued a manifesto: "We the poets, who have gathered our song from the drama of the people, . . . are one with the proletariat, vanguard of the revolution, to assist with our art the battle of the Bolivian people for national liberation and the implantation of socialism."[123] And a group of historians in La Paz refused to attend the second Congress of Bolivian Historians scheduled for Sucre in October 1971 unless the meeting's agenda were changed from a mere consideration of preserving national documents. Their protest stated: "To limit the Congress to the framework of mere archivism would mean that it has adopted a reactionary position at the margin of present Bolivian life. The scholar in general and historian in particular can in no way remain locked in a kind of marble tower not confronting national problems." Congress planners responded drily, "Study of the great national problems cannot be done from memory."[124]

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In conclusion, the Bolivian National Revolution, instigated and led by self-conscious propagandists, was more than an exercise in inflated rhetoric. These men used their crafts, journalism and literature, to awaken their country from stagnation and despair. They reached for a better social order, whether through the democratic process favored by the MNR or through the state socialism attractive to the ideologues of Torres' regime. When others measure the results of their work, these Bolivian writers ask only that the yardsticks of freedom of the press and private ownership of property long familiar to citizens of developed western democracies be used with care. Rather, they urge us to consider the Bolivian reality which they had to confront every day of their long struggle. And they

[122] *Ibid.*, July 24, 1971. See also July 25, 1971.
[123] *Ibid.*, July 20, 1971.
[124] *Ibid.*, July 4 and 18, 1971.

remind us that between American practices and their own lies a cultural chasm, all too infrequently bridged to arrive at mutual understanding.

The outcome is still in the balance. One Bolivian writer feared before Torres was overthrown that his country, with its central, pivotal position on the continent, might become the battlefield for the Spanish Civil War of the Americas. Only four years earlier Che Guevara had tried to make Bolivia the Sierra Maestra of the Andes—or the Vietnam of the hemisphere—but he failed because he had little to offer a people already engaged in their own national revolution.

In this regard, a look at the Bolivian attitude toward the Cuban revolution is revealing. In January 1959, when the fall of Fulgencio Batista brought hopes that freedom of the press would be restored in Cuba, *La Nación* demurred: "But liberty is so relative that, finally, we do not know how Castro can allow freedom of the press, since those faithful to Batista will rise in rebellion and do with him [Castro] what he did with his *caudillo* [strong man]. Castro cannot grant liberty of action to the censer-bearer journalists of Batista without placing in danger the conquest of July." Inevitably, the MNR writer concluded, Castro's partisans would cool off and begin to side with the opposition, "which is—don't forget it—the temperamental range of opinion in Hispanic America."[125]

[125] *La Nación*, Jan. 16, 1959.

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